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Viewing cable 05SANJOSE2202, COSTA RICA: PRESIDENT PACHECO AND COMMISSION OF

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- The middle box contains the header information that is associated with the cable. It includes information about the receiver(s) as well as a general subject.
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| Reference ID | Created | Released | Classification | Origin |
|-------------------------------|------------------|------------------|-------------------------------------|------------------|
| 05SANJOSE2202 | 2005-09-21 00:56 | 2011-08-30 01:44 | UNCLASSIFIED//FOR OFFICIAL USE ONLY | Embassy San Jose |

Appears in these articles:

<http://www.nacion.com/2011-03-03/Investigacion/NotasDestacadas/Investigacion2697430.aspx>
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This record is a partial extract of the original cable. The full text of the original cable is not available.

UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 02 SAN JOSE 002202

SIPDIS

SENSITIVE

WHA/CEN
EB FOR WCRAFT, BMANOGUE
E FOR DEDWARDS
WHA FOR WMIELE
WHA/EPSC FOR KURS, LGUMBINER
H FOR JHAGAN
STATE PASS TO USTR FOR RVARGO, NMOORJANI, AMALITO

E.O. 12958: N/A
TAGS: [ETRD](#) [ECPS](#) [ECON](#) [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [SOCI](#) [CS](#)
SUBJECT: COSTA RICA: PRESIDENT PACHECO AND COMMISSION OF
EMINENT PERSONS HOLD PRESS CONFERENCE (CORRECTED COPY)

REF: SAN JOSE 02181

¶1. (U) Summary. On September 20, 2005, after meeting with his cabinet and the five-member Commission of Eminent Persons, President Pacheco held a press conference to discuss the Commission's report on the United States-Central American-Dominican Republic Free Trade Agreement (CAFTA-DR). The President was accompanied on the stage by the Commission members, Foreign Trade Minister Manuel Gonzalez, and Vice President Lineth Saborio. Each member of the Commission briefly made comments on aspects of CAFTA-DR that were neutral-to-positive, and consistent in the theme that the complementary agenda and implementing legislation are very important to the success of CAFTA-DR. President Pacheco did not state when he would send CAFTA-DR to the Legislative Assembly to start the ratification process. He did say that he would meet with various administration advisers throughout the week and would again discuss this topic with government councils and his cabinet on September 27, 2005 to determine

next steps. End Summary.

12. (U) A consistent message from all five members of the Commission was that their report must be taken as a whole and in context. Franklin Chang, Chair of the Commission, explained to the press the methodology that the Commission used to complete its report, which is available on-line in Spanish at www.casapres.go.cr. Chang stated that the Commission met 34 times in the past 60 days and talked to 30 different persons about specific aspects of the agreement. He noted the Commission members were not trade experts and do not pretend to be. He also stressed the report was unanimous. He stated that the most important part of the report deals with telecommunications.

13. (U) The other four members of the Commission, Alvaro Antillon, former Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA) official, Father Guido Villalta, the Roman Catholic Church's representative, Gabriel Macaya, ex-provost of the University of Costa Rica, and Dr. Rodrigo Gamez, President of the Costa Rican Institute of Biodiversity (INBio) all expressed the need for implementation of a robust complementary agenda to take advantage of the benefits that CAFTA-DR may bring and to ensure that all Costa Ricans realize these benefits.

14. (U) Antillon was the only member to specifically discuss details of the agreement, effectively and methodically explaining away three common myths. First, he explained that under the Vienna convention, both treaties and agreements bind countries with equal force. Second, he said that the constitutional court will review all aspects of the agreement, including questions about sovereignty, so it is unnecessary now to speculate if any parts of the agreement violate the constitution. Third, he explained that any party could withdraw from the agreement with six months notice per article 22.7.

15. (U) Father Villalta stated that profound changes in the social, political, and infrastructure systems will be required. He further stated that CAFTA-DR will not decrease poverty or increase employment unless these changes are made.

Sensitivity to ensuring the well-being of all was also a consistent theme. Gamez referred to the reality of Costa Rica's situation -- that the U.S. is Costa Rica's largest trading partner, and that the GOCR must find ways of taking advantage of its geographic proximity to the world's largest market.

16. (U) Minister Gonzalez said Costa Rica had lost its sense of urgency and that it needs to focus on its priorities. He cited the need to balance Costa Rica's increased integration into the world economy with maintaining the solidarity and well-being of its citizens, but stated that Costa Rica must move forward on CAFTA-DR. Gonzalez cautioned that not all of the many changes that Costa Rica should make can be incorporated into the complementary agenda, but that a long-term strategy was necessary to ensure a better future for all Costa Ricans.

17. (U) When the press specifically asked President Pacheco when he would send CAFTA-DR to the Assembly, he first deferred the question to Vice President Saborio who stated that they plan to meet with various advisers this week and to discuss next steps at the next cabinet meeting on September 27, 2005. She gave a spirited defense for the linkage of CAFTA-DR to fiscal reform. When pressed again on the same issue, President Pacheco stated that his position has not changed -- it is his responsibility to send CAFTA-DR to the Assembly and he will do that, declining to say when. Many times throughout the press conference, President Pacheco, Saborio, and Gonzalez stated that fiscal reform is still an Administration priority and is needed to help pay for a robust complementary agenda.

COMMENTS

18. (SBU) While the Commission members (with the exception of Antillon) offered no specifics, their tone could be characterized as neutral-to-positive. At this point the only thing that is clear is that President Pacheco will discuss this issue further with other GOCR officials next Tuesday, September 27, 2005, and may make further comments at that time. CAFTA-DR remains in the President's hands, and he is still reluctant to act. (Note: We are reviewing the text of the Commission's report and will provide feedback septel.
End Note.)

FRISBIE